

Bats help Battle Crop Pests

Head and shoulders
Photo of DC or
Soil Conservationist
here

By _____,
District Conservationist, Natural
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_____ County.

Bats get a bad rap. These crop and farm-friendly creatures consume enormous amounts of insects daily.

They eat the beetles, moths, and leafhoppers that cost landowners billions of dollars in damages each year.

Agricultural ally vs. insects.

The benefits of bats to farmers goes on and on. A few examples:

- 1) Just 150 big brown bats can eat enough cucumber beetles each summer to protect farmers from 33 million of the rootworm larvae. This pest costs American farmers an estimated billion dollars a year.
- 2) Bats from just three caves near San Antonio, Texas, eat about a million pounds nightly of insects, including many costly pests.
- 3) A Georgia pecan grower is no longer losing 30% of his crop to hickory shuckworms. He installed bat houses-- one of them hosts a colony of 2,000 bats.
- 4) A little brown bat can eat 1200 insects in an hour.

Fact vs. myth on bats

Misconceptions abound on bats. For instance, they are not blind, they do not become entangled in human hair and they seldom transmit disease to other animals or humans.

Some bats can maneuver like helicopters to pluck insects from foliage, while others fly 10,000 feet high and dive like jets.

Like most animals, bats suffer from habitat loss. Their primary cause of decline is destruction of natural roosts by humans.

Landowners can help by building and putting up bat houses on their property, or working with highway departments to create roosts under bridges. The NRCS is helping to ensure mines that are closed can continue to provide habitat and openings for bats.

Information on bats, including how to build a bat house, how to benefit by attracting bats to bridges, and how to protect bats in caves, is available from Bat Conservation International on the web.

For more information, stop at our office at _____ (Number) _____ (Street) _____ in _____ (city) _____, or visit the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Management Institute's website at www.whmi.nrcs.usda.gov or the NRCS home web site at www.nrcs.usda.gov



Mexican freetail bats leaving Bracken Cave in Texas for their nightly feed. Bats from this and two other nearby caves eat about a million pounds of insects nightly.

Wildlife Ways Did you know....



Not only do bats see as well as other animals, they use "echolocation" to detect objects as fine as a human hair in total darkness.